

REMARKS

The undersigned agent first wishes to thank Examiner Moorthy for granting the telephonic interview on January 9, 2005. During the interview, the undersigned agent and the Examiner discussed the merits of the final rejection of claims 29-46 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Levine. Particularly, independent claims 29 and 41 relate to a two-stage method of time stamping a document. Claim 29 is directed to the first stage in which an outside agency generates a message authentication code (MAC) based on a time stamp receipt and a secret key. Claim 41 is directed to the second stage in which the outside agency validates the MAC and, if the MAC is valid, certifies the time stamp receipt by cryptographically signing the time stamp receipt using the secret key. The rejection is based on the assertion that Levine discloses a MAC. However, as stated in the interview, this is incorrect.

A MAC is a one-way hash function that includes the secret key. It is a key-dependent function of both the uncertified time stamp receipt and a secret key. In other words, the outside agency uses the secret key as input to a function to generate the MAC. The specification provides some examples of how the outside agency might generate the MAC. *Spec.*, p. 7, ln. 21 – p. 9, ln. 10.

Levine does not use a secret key to generate a MAC, but rather uses a secret key to cryptographically sign a document as is conventional. *Levine*, col. 3, ln. 54 – col. 4, ln. 8. Signing a document using a secret key as in Levine is not the same as generating a MAC based on the secret key as called out in the claimed invention. Particularly, signing a document using a secret key allows any third party that has access to a corresponding public key to verify the signature of the time stamping service, as well as the hash of the document. *Levine*, col. 5, ll. 12-24. Thus, the Levine method neither needs nor requires an outside agency for verification. Contrast this with the claimed invention where the secret key is part of the MAC. Because only

the outside agency that generated the MAC has knowledge of the secret key, only that outside agency can verify the MAC in the second stage of the claimed invention.

In short, Levine does not generate a MAC. Therefore, Levine cannot teach the "generating" and "transmitting" elements of claim 29. Nor can Levine teach any of the elements of claim 41 since all recite a MAC. As such, Levine fails to anticipate claim 29 and claim 41 under §102.

Applicants note that the Examiner has allowed claims 1-28 and 47-50. Because Levine fails to anticipate claims 29-46, Applicants respectfully request allowance of all pending claims 1-50.

Respectfully submitted,

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